

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY: A DAY OF STRUGGLE AGAINST EXPLOITATION, CHAUVINISM AND WAR



"The 1917 Working Women's Day has become memorable in history. On this day the Russian women raised the torch of proletarian revolution and set the world on fire. The February revolution marks its beginning from this day." – Kollontai

Working Women's Day, March 8th, is rooted in the struggle of the working class. The working women of Russia, on March 8th 1917, marched through the streets of Saint Petersburg under the class banner "Down with the war" and brought their husbands and sons out of the factories. With soldiers mixing into the crowds of labourers, the working women of Saint Petersburg had sparked the world workers revolution. Soviet power, in turn, made massive advances in the living conditions of women, e.g. being the first state in history to legalize abortion. Amidst the graveyards of Europe and the economic ruin, world capital finally gasped in horror with the recognition that the working class could impose itself onto history. Today, our class is facing massive economic attacks by that very same foe which increasingly views military conflict as the best solution to its crisis, and working women bear the brunt all too often.

The picture for women workers is bleak. In the United States, the legality of abortion has

been rolled back in numerous states since the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022. In Iran, women disobeying the modesty law and protesting the state are continually met with deadly police violence. In Canada, the government twiddles its thumbs as more and more evidence leaks about the horrors of Indigenous femicide. All over the world, patriarchal violence bears down on the heads of women. To the partisans of "democratic progress" this regression cannot be explained. For all the laurels capitalism bestows upon itself as liberator of humanity, the wreath is covered in the gruesome blood of women workers.

Capitalist society, rather than having progressed by gradual enlightenment, has always been driven by capital itself. The capitalist state can bestow rights as quickly and arbitrarily as it can take them away. Those same victories working women secured during the Russian Revolution were snatched away by Stalinist doctrine, criminalizing abortion to meet the demands to produce a new wave of workers. Worse yet, consider how the liberal feminist appeal to the "rights of women" has been used to justify barbarism, often against women. To save the poor women of Afghanistan and Yemen from their own "barbarous" men, the "humanitarian" drone operators of the U.S. military fire "humane" missiles at weddings. To "liberate" Gaza from the grip of "backwards" Hamas, the very "progressive" IDF turns apartment blocks into piles of rubble, over which

they raise a pride flag. Perhaps nowhere is the contradiction between actual equality and the equality of liberal rights clearer than how the basic decencies afforded to trans women are pitted against cis women, the former put up as predators of the latter by reactionaries, condemning both to horrors of patriarchy, pitting woman against woman based on something akin to phrenology.

Capitalist society is a social system which carries the muck of the ages. These forms of oppression change as they adjust to the logic of capital. Insofar as equality can be realized in capitalism it is an equality organized in accordance with a world based on division and exploitation. Capitalism can cede some rights to women just as it can take it away, since the real motive force in this society is capital. If feminism is conducive to capitalist accumulation, then the bosses will follow it, so long as it doesn't jeopardise keeping most of humanity in perpetual misery. Therefore, nothing prevents capitalism from being just as feminist as it is patriarchal, if feminism means that women workers are still exploited by bourgeois women as their enlightened overseers. If the wage gap were closed, the head of the state were a woman, and the richest people on earth were all self-made women, it would not change the fact that capital has a constant need to attack the general condition of the working class in its drive for profits. In this attack, the most precarious and marginal sections of the class are assaulted even more viciously. Capitalism can only superficially resolve some of these inequalities; their roots lie in the fundamental inequality responsible for the system, that being the wage relation. Therefore, the abolition of such loathsome conditions can only be brought about by the full abolition of class society.

Some modern feminists disavow their more mainstream liberal counterparts, distinguishing themselves as "radical" or "intersectional." However, this feminism ultimately only obscures the centrality of class in history. Feminism, in this way, refers to a specific historical movement that is inherently class collaborationist - it cannot be used synonymously with the struggle for women's liberation. It is only the working class's fight as a class for itself that can answer the social question. That feminism is an identity movement, not a class movement, proves its bourgeois existence. The identity of womanhood does not transcend the fundamental economic relations constituting capitalist society and its political currents. A "woman's identity" is used as leverage to squeeze more profits out of their exploitation, and as propaganda to lionize capitalist society. Worse, those radical feminists who pose womanhood as a class itself (!) serve to disrupt and confuse workers. A bourgeois woman is not on the same side as a woman worker, while all members of the working class have the same common goal. The most "radical" of feminism can only be a tool to place working women in a class alliance with capital, incompatible with the way communist class politics fights oppres-

sion. All this seeks to legitimize capitalist justice as a "lesser evil", just as the British suffragettes recruited soldiers into the first great imperialist slaughter for "king and country". As communists, we advocate for more. Not a class alliance for "women's rights", but the unity of the working class for the liberation of women and of all humankind; for women workers as part of the whole workers' struggle to take initiative and destroy the system exploiting the working masses.

Capitalist "progress" pales in comparison to the new world at the end of the worker's struggle. But on this day let's look back on our history, the history of the working class, to understand the concrete ways in which workers have triumphed over chauvinism. The political participation of women achieved in this revolution was not that of casting ballots every four years, but one of constant and active participation through workers' councils. In place of the capitalist "progress" of bringing more women into factories to replace their male counterparts, through the slaughter of the first world war, the international workers' movement sparked by the women workers of Russia was the one to decisively end the imperialist war.

Today, in spite of the economic assault of declining real wages, the social assaults seeking to further drive working women into precarity, and the imperialist war threatening workers across the world, working women have been on the front ranks of the working class struggle. Sectors traditionally dominated by women such as education and nursing have presented themselves as some of the most militant of the working class. In 2022, Ontario educators nearly sparked a general strike which was only averted by backroom deals between the unions and state. In Britain, striking nurses have been a continual sore point for capital serving as a reference point for the struggle of the rest of the class. In Bangladesh, the predominantly female textile workers have waged direct conflict with police, the effects of which have hit the pockets of capitalist investments in fashion throughout the world.

It is incorrect to imply that workers' struggle for merely economic demands will automatically transform itself into the genuine emancipation of women. On the contrary, it must be a conscious political struggle. The working class movement must recognize its struggle as a struggle for human emancipation, and only through the working class movement can there be liberation of humanity. To realize this struggle, our class needs a centralized, international, revolutionary communist party to direct all struggles against capitalist attacks towards a fight for a classless society. It is inherent to the historic task of our class to dispel chauvinism from its own ranks, to unify as a class, and to fight for power. There can be no women's emancipation without workers' emancipation! There can be no workers' emancipation without women's emancipation!

-IWG and KB, North American affiliates
of the ICT



COP28: A Climate Cop-Out

The resolution for the UN's COP28 in Dubai is just another compromise that places the needs of capitalist accumulation before the urgency of the deteriorating environmental situation. This isn't simply because of the conference's location in UAE, or Sultan Al Jaber, the conference's president, being the chief executive of the state's oil giant ADNOC.

This outcome is not at all dissimilar to every preceding conference since 1995, which have all revolved around the ever growing social cost of capitalism. The much lauded net-zero emission goal only covers unabated fossil fuels which means that the phaseout can be delayed and fossil fuel emissions will continue to grow. (continued on pg 2)

Keeping global temperature rise below the 1.5°C target is still disingenuously being kept as a priority despite its impossibility. The 2015 Paris target requires carbon production be halved by 2030. This is not happening in the slightest, as oil firms have been ramping up production to suit capital’s war preparations, and states such as the USA are emerging as a dominant exporter under the guise of democracy against Russia.

The resolution calls for nations "transitioning away from fossil fuels in energy systems, in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade", and recommends limiting new coal power plants and increasing investments into the construction and modernization of green and renewable energy. It was recommended for states to increase investments into "low-emissions technologies, including ... renewables, nuclear, abatement and removal technologies, such as carbon capture." The COP28 resolution calls for tripling the capacity of nuclear energy output by 2050 and for states and financial insti-

tutions to prioritize it. Whether capitalist production is “green,” “low emissions,” or renewable energy, it will continue the expansion of greenhouse gas emissions; capitalism demands constant accumulation in order to properly function.

The closing resolution coincides with the war in Ukraine and increased imperialist tension, which has brought energy security to the forefront. Jens Stoltenberg, the head of NATO, has stated this explicitly, and seeks to end reliance on Russian oil and gas along with green energy components made with Chinese rare earth metals. This has nothing to do with reducing CO2 emissions. Rather, their drive for nationally determined solutions to contend with the multiplying crises can be seen with the Biden administration's commitment to reduce its dependence on OPEC.

While the Inflation Reduction Act put billions towards “green” energy (described there as “energy security”), production of more profitable fossil fuels increased. In 2023, the US became the largest liquefied natural gas ex-

porter and is now producing more oil than any country in history, more than double what the US produced a decade ago. The US Energy Information Administration forecasts that oil and LNG extraction will both increase until 2050. By 2030, the US and Qatar are projected to account for half of the world’s LNG supply. This trend can be seen throughout the world. The Brazilian government’s Ministry of Mines and Energy forecasts that its already massive oil production will nearly double by 2030. Capitalists in Brazil have expanded oil extraction year after year, with 2023 breaking records (all this under the environmentalist hero of COP27, Lula da Silva). Production and use of fossil fuels will continue alongside green energy expansion and greenhouse gas offsets, a trend that is reinforced by, allows the expansion of, and gives a greater stake in imperialist conflict. According to US Climate Envoy John Kerry, “The increased production is a reflection of Ukraine, the effort to come back from Covid and the reflection of what happened with Russia cutting off all the gas to Europe... we’re

sending a lot over there and other places to try to help them out.”

Criticism has arisen regarding the presence of over a thousand fossil-fuel lobbyists at COP28. However, the reality is that even in their absence, no substantive change would have occurred. First, the agreement is not binding on any of the nations involved. And even if it were, significant restrictions on fossil-fuel use would be ignored. It is far too profitable to use cheap energy sources for these nations to remain competitive in the global market without using them. And that’s the heart of the problem.

Capitalist states have to maintain profitability for their national capital or face ruin. As long as they exist, there is no way to solve our deepening environmental crisis. Only a society that does not require profit could ever hope to avert global environmental devastation. That is why there is no solution to the environmental crisis other than international proletarian revolution.

Communism or extinction!



Anti-Black Racism: An Insidious Poison Against the Class Struggle

As the central obstacle to the unity of workers in the USA, racism is no new invention of capitalism. It is as old as slavery, and therefore predates even the current configuration of the exploitation of labor by capital in North America.

The kind of racism Americans are accustomed to has its roots in the beginnings of the cultivation of Virginia tobacco and the early period of the British-American colonies. What was happening in the colonies at the time? Class conflict. Periodic battles between white and black laborers on one side, and the forerunners of the bourgeoisie on the other were mounting in the 16th and 17th centuries. Consequently, racism à l’anglais was written into the law.

In 1676, white indentured servants and African slaves rebelled together against the British administration in Virginia. In order to

avoid future incidents and divide white laborers from slaves, the following racial code was created: black skin = ‘branded’ labor, white skin = ‘free’ labor.

In the 19th century, the interests of Southern elites—whose fortunes were based on the exploitation of slaves—collided with the interests of an adolescent bourgeoisie in the North, whose fortunes were based on the exploitation of a new class of wage-laborers: the proletariat. In the face of a changing social system subject to capitalist economic laws and the outcome of the Civil War, the Southern elite’s social and political position became precarious. Capitalism in the South had already been dependent on linking property to white supremacy and in dispossessing non-white property owners.

After the Civil War, this distinction between white and black was emphasized even more.

To defend their place within the social system after the Civil War, Southern plutocrats attacked and repressed emancipated slaves. The more than ten thousand lynchings between 1865-1877, the de facto disenfranchisement of Black people, the reign of terror of the Ku Klux Klan, etc., culminated in the notorious Jim Crow laws.

Fast-forwarding to 1919, the US became a hotbed of class struggle as the Russian Revolution inspired workers internationally. The newly formed Communist Party of America played a leading role in some struggles, such as the Great Steel Strike of 1919. Due to a combination of factors, the strike was defeated by January 1920, but one of the bourgeoisie’s most potent venoms, which the steel companies generously dispensed to the workers, was racist and chauvinist sentiment. To break the strike, the bosses ordered their spies amongst the workers to “stir up as much bad feeling as you possibly can” by pitting white workers against the 30,000-40,000 Black and Mexican workers (excluded from the main trade unions like the AFL) employed as strike-breakers.

White workers were duped into anti-Black racist hysteria by their bosses, and engaged in anti-Black riots and lynchings. The workers’ defeat was paved with the corpses of Black proletarians, assassinated in the most infuriating way imaginable, at the hands of their white class siblings who were used as nothing more than as pawns by the bosses to deliver a devastating gut-punch to the proletariat’s strength at a critical historical period for our class.

Present-day examples of how the bourgeoisie directly employs racist divisions to fragment our class are plenty. Take 2020, for example. The working class is hit with a double-whammy of a deadly pandemic, of which workers were the first and frontline victims (“we have to keep working to save the economy!”), and an economic crisis involving 14% official unemployment and which threatens to make millions (if not more) homeless. Strikes are outlawed by the state under the guise of an emergency situation. George Floyd is suffocated by one pig while three others watch on. The video makes its rounds on the news and social media. A powder-keg situation is set alight, as unemployed workers that have been confined at home for months, duke it out with the police in the streets for two weeks in fits of rage at a recurring, historic injustice committed against Black proletarians.

Here we get two responses from the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, the Democratic

Party NGO-complex sweeps in to gain control of the street demonstrations, transforming them into an appendage of Biden’s 2020 campaign and amplifying the calls to root out white “outside agitators” (cleave off any potential unity between white and Black workers against the state’s forces of order). A multiracial Democratic Party Congressional congregation dons Ghanaian kente cloth in June 2020 to show how sincere they are. Now it becomes about “amplifying Black voices”, that is, those Black voices with the capital to be heard, and slowly erasing the initial, elementary response against the proletariat’s physical enemy, the police. On the other hand, the GOP brings out the most putrid white identity politics, appealing to long tried-and-tested capitalist stereotypes of Black people as criminals, to complete the racist divide between white and Black workers. The end result? Dismemberment of workers along racial lines.

We see then that the function of racial separation of white and Black, whether this is enforced through law (Jim Crow), overt violence (lynchings, police murders), or covert violence (the enormously disproportionate poverty among Black workers) has been, and remains, to divide the class of toilers from uniting against the property-owning capitalist class. The division of white workers from their class siblings has been a reliable instrument in the class-war toolbox of the bourgeoisie both North and South, past and present.

In contrast, the working class response against racism requires bringing its fight against racism onto its own terrain. The struggle against police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, housing segregation, workplace discrimination, wage theft, and all other aspects of racism must be carried out through working class organs, with the ultimate aim of the abolition of the capitalist system.

This abolition of capitalism and class society can only be done by the working class through its revolutionary seizure of power. By its own strength, the working class must self-organize to eradicate the roots of racial oppression. This entails the creation and presence of the centralized, revolutionary party with solid roots in the working class, necessary to guide our global class towards its historical task. The role of the party is to provide the links between these struggles to the communist program, to make it concrete and relevant for those fighting against racism that communism is the only viable alternative.

Who We Are

"The IWG stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organizations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organization - a 'party' for want of a better word - not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class, the majority of the world's population, is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system, it will have to unite and overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites."

The Internationalist Workers’ Group is the US affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently answered questions: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>

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